

MINSK BAROMETER

Monitoring of
foreign policy and
regional security

Dear readers!

We gladly present the eleventh issue of Minsk Barometer, which analyzes Belarus's foreign policy and security status in the months of September and October 2019.

Belarus's relationship with **Russia** is characterized by ongoing hard search for ways to achieve compromise. None of the pending issues has been resolved. Media negativity is gradually growing around integration.

The level and intensity of Minsk's contacts with the **European Union** remain consistently high. The delay-ridden campaign to adopt the visa facilitation and readmission agreements is gradually coming to its end.

Credit cooperation has been actively developing in relations with **China**.

In the **US** dimension, the intensity of diplomatic contacts remains high, whereas security-related communication channels are being strengthened.

The **Ukrainian** segment showed record-breaking growth. Belarus and Ukraine have successfully overcome a few conflicts and demonstrated in practice the contours of new approaches to future engagement.

During the period under review, Belarus made significant efforts to enhance its own **security** against the backdrop of a serious deterioration of the situation in the region fuelled by attempts of the key players to ensure their security at each other's expense.

Yours respectfully,

Dzianis Melyantsou,

Editor, Minsk Barometer

Coordinator of Foreign Policy of Belarus program,
Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations

4 Relationship with Russia

8 Relationship with the European Union

11 Relationship with China

13 Relationship with the U.S.

17 Relationship with Ukraine

21 Security Barometer

32 Appendix 1
Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

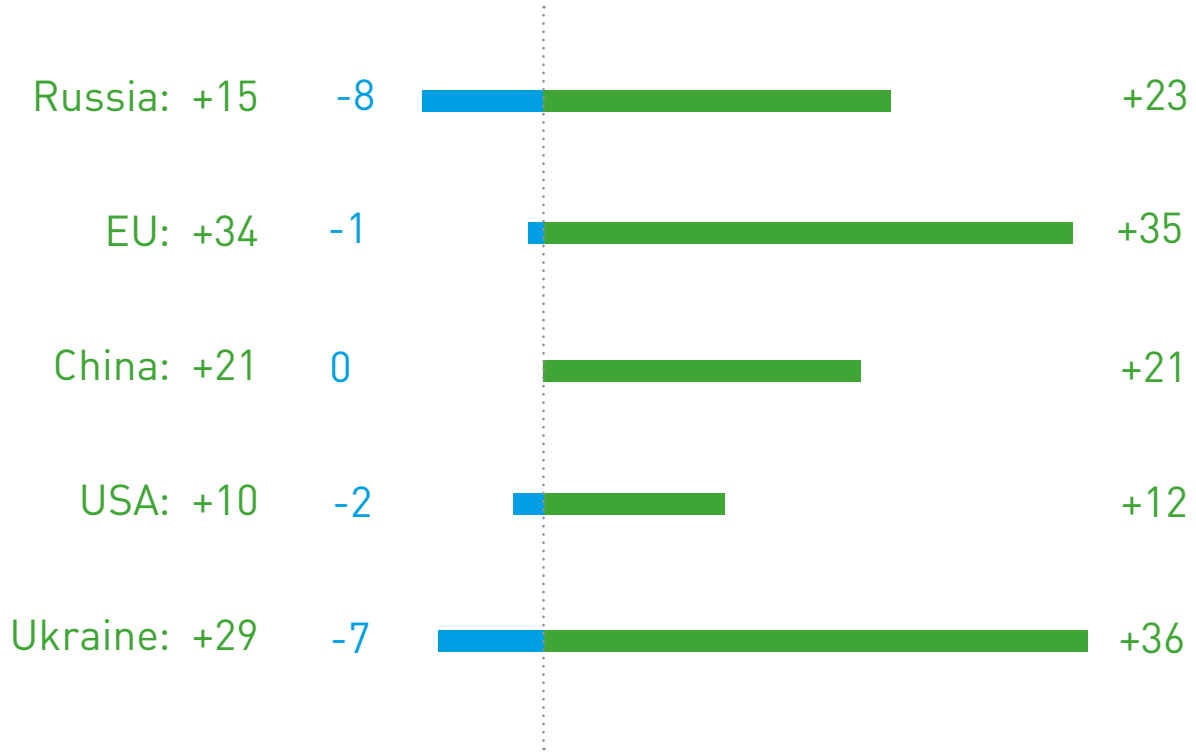
40 Appendix 2
Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

42 Appendix 3
Color scale of regional security tensions

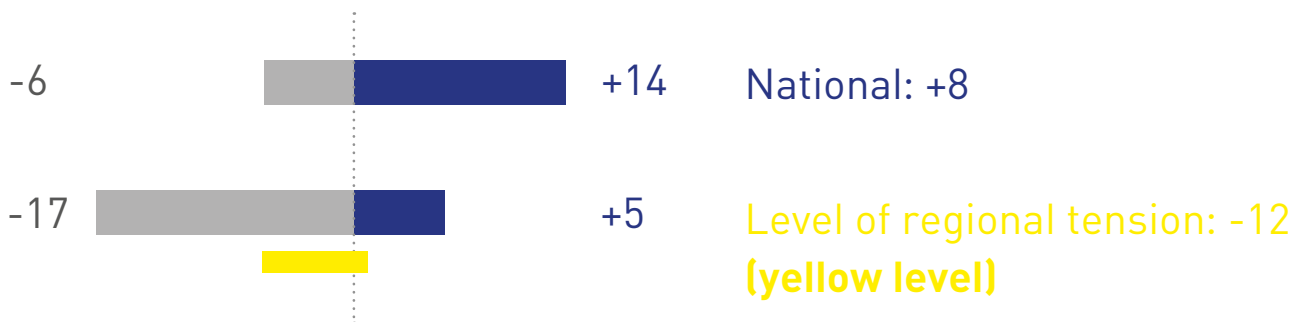
43 Authors

Minsk Dialogue
Council on International
Relations

Relations development indices:

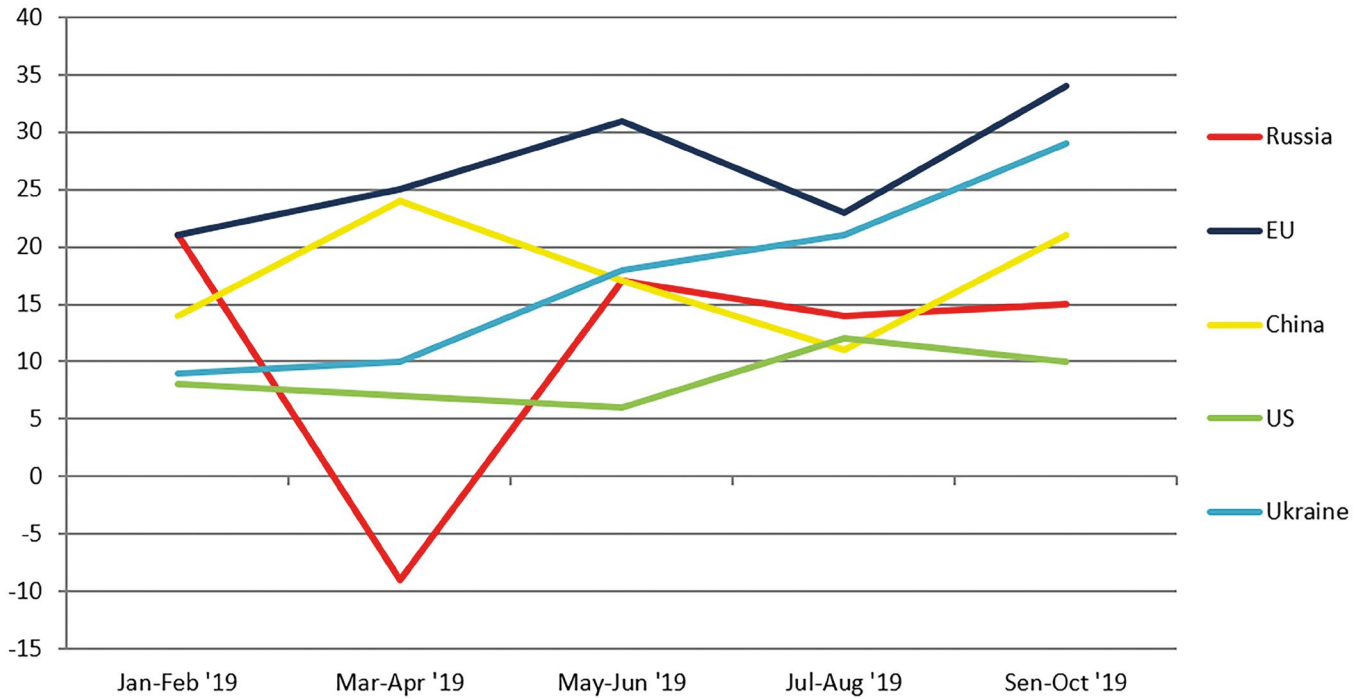


Security:

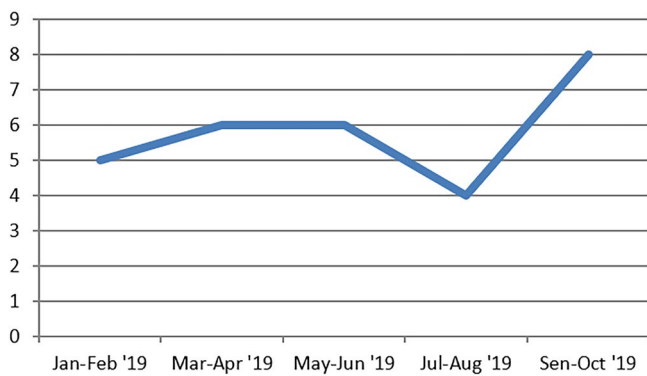


The yellow level indicates that military and other activity is observed that is capable of bringing about escalated tension. The situation calls for close attention.

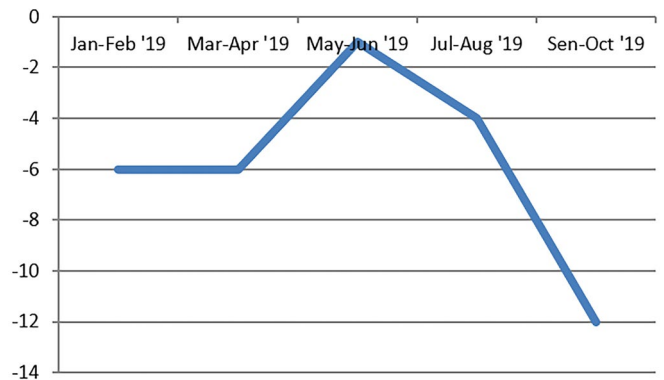
Dynamics of foreign policy indices



National security



Level of regional tension



Relationship with Russia

+23



-8

Resulting index: +15

Positive points: +23

Negative points: -8

Trends

1. The search for compromise in developing “roadmaps” progresses slowly and with many difficulties; the “comfortable depth” of integration does not seem to be visible.
2. No solution to the oil and gas issue was found.
3. Belarusian leadership is getting ready for a situation, where no compromise in its relations with Russia has been found by the start of 2020.
4. Integration-related media negativity is growing.

Developments and processes

Political agenda

The limited relaxation of tensions observed in the previous period under review failed to bring about any compromise in any of the significant areas of engagement throughout September and October. Comments made by the Belarusian and Russian authorities with respect to the bilateral agenda give the impression that both parties consider the approaches of the respective counterpart to integration to be unfair and infringing on their interests. For example, Minsk believes that Russia insists that Belarus limit its freedom in its economic policy in exchange for things that should already have been implemented under previous agreements, but have not been implemented so far. In turn, Russia believes its value as an economic partner to be so high that it wishes to see neither Belarus’s contribution, nor its sacrifice in maintaining this cooperation, while the benefits that Belarus derives from this engagement are referred to as “subsidies”.

Union Treaty

A recap: in July and August, the working groups responsible for the improvement of the Union Treaty gave up on their ambitions to amend the document and establish supranational bodies at this stage. Instead, they focused on attempts to advance integration in 30+ specific areas, elaborating “roadmaps” for the integration of tax, customs, digital, industrial, and other policies.

On 6 September, Prime Ministers of Belarus and Russia Siarhiej Rumas and Dmitry Medvedev initialed the integration program for the two countries. This program is a framework plan for the progressive implementation of “roadmaps”. At that time – according to Medvedev – no specific arrangements required for the adoption of regulations were spelt out in the “roadmaps”.

But even at the grassroots integration level it was hard for the parties to achieve compromise – arguably for the same reasons that prevented the respective teams from

addressing bilateral cooperation issues during the previous stage. The unsophisticated application of Russian policies to Belarus will reduce the centralization of its economy, decrease the fiscal capacity of the Belarusian state and will produce an additional impact on the already affected competitiveness of products made by state-run enterprises in both the Russian and domestic markets – at least at the initial stage. In most cases, Russian economic agents see no sense in including Belarus's interests in mandatory rules of the game.

As far as one can judge, the uncompromising stance of the Belarusian side and counter-proposals regarding, for example, the tax policy, exhaust the patience of Russian officials, who tend to "encourage" their partners through the media.¹

As of the beginning of November, no progress regarding the "roadmaps" was reported and no date for the meeting of the presidents was agreed. The heads of governments are likely to meet during the final weeks of November, but neither head of state shows confidence that at least some of the 31 "roadmaps" will be ready by the meeting of the Supreme State Council of the Union State.

Oil and Gas

Since Minister of Economic Development of Russia Maxim Oreshkin has made it clear that oil and natural gas issues are also included in the "roadmaps", which will take years to develop, let alone implement, it is obvious that the terms of cooperation in the oil and gas sector at least for the next two years will have to be agreed beyond the framework of the Union State.

Belarus and Russia have essentially got back to the positions, where the confrontation originally started. At the end of November and beginning of December 2018, President Lukashenka, upset by the failure to effectively address natural gas and oil supplies in 2020 the way Belarus wanted it, undertook a series of demarches against the Russian leadership, including claims to President Putin at the EEU summit. In response, Russia issued the so-called "Medvedev's ultimatum", making favorable oil and gas terms of trade dependent on "integration depth."

Throughout the 10 months that had passed since then, the parties have tried to identify the exact location of "comfortable integration depth", having halted negotiations over oil and gas. As a result, oil and gas issues will need to be addressed based upon the current alignment in this sector and exclusively of integration pace – mutual ultimatums did not affect this pattern in any way.

Anyway, the context of the negotiations has been somewhat clarified during that period. First of all, it became clear that Nord Stream 2 would not become operational by the start of 2020, which means that Russia will have to negotiate a transit deal with Ukraine from a weaker position than it had expected. This factor has an indirect effect on the prospects of the Belarusian contract. Second of all, the Druzhba pipeline incident both compromised Russia as an oil supplier, and encouraged Belarus's communication with other oil and gas suppliers and transit countries, including Poland, the United States and Kazakhstan. These factors somewhat enhance Belarus's negotiating stance. However, the redirection of Russian gas and oil exports to the Asia-Pacific Region and, accordingly, the weaker interest in the European market, on the contrary, weakens it.

According to some remarks made by Aliaksandr Lukashenka, the expectations of the Belarusian side have become more humble – what is meant here is that Belarus seeks to have a reverse excise tax (as applied to Russia's tax maneuver) on 7-8 million tonnes of crude (the level of Belarus's domestic consumption), as well as preferential supplies of 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas. The so-called "re-clearance" (transfer to the Belarusian budget of duties originally applicable to 6 million tons of crude, which was part of the gas contract for 2018-2019) also remains unresolved.

¹ See, for example, articles in Kommersant and RBC: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4094365> и <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/08/10/2019/5d9c742f9a7947adf67bb889>

Trade

In January–August, two-way commodity trade failed to reach last year's level, meaning that trade with Russia continues to stagnate. Russia's deliveries to Belarus edged up by 2% year-on-year, whereas Belarus's sales in Russia decreased by 3.8%, despite the fact that Russia's export supplies were affected by short deliveries of crude due to the Druzhba pipeline incident. Crude supplies went down by 2.3% in volume terms and by 4.9% in value terms on a year-on-year basis. At the same time, supplies of almost all other export commodities increased.

Belarusian exports shrank, but some items, such as cars, agricultural machinery, spare parts for cars, plastics and polymers, metal structures and tires, medicines and TV sets showed expansion. Sales of meat and dairy products to Russia also increased, i.e. Russia-imposed restrictions turned out to be weaker in 2019. Supplies of the following commodity groups decreased: electric transformers, refrigerators, electric cookers, shoes, socks and tights, fish and sausage.

Bottom line: despite the decline in oil imports, despite the growth in deliveries of dairy and meat to Russia, Belarus sees its share in the Russian market consistently decrease, while other manufacturers, especially those Russian, expand their market share. This is not necessarily a bad sign amid Russia's current approach to mutual trade, because sales in other EEU countries and the EU have been growing.

Multilateral platforms of the EEU and the CIS

Belarus is trying to promote the issues that remain unresolved in its bilateral relations with Russia on multilateral platforms. At the EEU summit in Yerevan on 1 October, Lukashenka called for the removal of barriers to trade within the EEU. He was supported by all of the EEU presidents. Next year, Belarus will assume presidency in this organization, which will be officially transferred at a summit in St. Petersburg scheduled for this December.

Belarus managed to have amendments to the EEU Treaty with respect to the collection of indirect taxes, joined the agreement on the principles of harmonization of legislation in gas supply and transportation (Belarus has notably sought to have Russia reduce gas transit prices in its territory for supplies to the EEU countries, which would bring natural gas prices on the border with Belarus to the level of prices in Russia's Smolensk Region). The Yerevan Summit also approved the concept of the common financial market of the EEU. Belarus and EDB signed an agreement to support exports of Belarusian commodities.

Public opinion and the media

Belarus's civil society voices its concerns because of the lack of information about the status of the integration process, filing petitions, sending requests to the state authorities about the essence of the negotiations between Belarus and Russia. The media pick up any negative speculations and fakes of Russian Telegram-channels about the Belarus-Russia relationship, and the Belarusian state media not only fail to work proactively, but also ignore the growing negative atmosphere around the integration.

Forecast

Belarus and Russia will likely come to an agreement and manage to sign the "roadmaps" – although not necessarily by 8 December, albeit "in a package", along with the gas and oil agreements for the next year. The essence of the "maps" at this stage will determine the framework approaches to the harmonization of economic policies, and remain declarative and symbolic. A conflict over the signing of the "roadmaps" and the determination of the

terms of cooperation in the oil and gas sector cannot be ruled out, though, due to the painful nature of the sector and the general uncertainty about energy supplies in the region. Nevertheless, the conflict, if it should break out at all, is likely to be short.

It seems likely that the current level of Russian natural gas prices for Belarus will be maintained for another year or two, rather than reduced, contrary to what the Belarusian side is trying to achieve. Neither party is motivated to make an agreement regarding these issues for a longer period of time. Russia will better understand its place in the EU energy market and the role of Belarus in energy delivery after 2021-2022, when Nord Stream 2 is likely to start operating, plans to purchase LNG from Poland have been partially implemented, and pipeline gas and oil supplies to China have commenced.

Belarus has a high chance of reducing the energy consumption of its economy and, consequently, its need for Russian energy, as well as experimenting with alternatives. Judging by the draft budget, the government does not really believe that the negotiations on the "re-clearance" of Russian oil and compensation for the Russian tax maneuver will succeed by the end of the year. Most likely, these negotiations will continue within the framework of the campaign to detail respective "roadmaps" in the first half of 2020.

Relationship with the European Union



Trends

1. The level and intensity of Minsk's contacts with the EU institutions and states remains consistently high.
2. The lingering campaign to sign the visa facilitation and readmission agreements is gradually coming to its end.
3. The factor of election campaigns is making its way back into the Belarus-EU agenda, but its role turns out to be secondary.

Developments and processes

At the very beginning of the reviewed period – September 12 – Aliaksandr Lukashenka received credentials from several newly arrived European ambassadors, including the new head of the EU Delegation to Belarus, Dirk Schuebel. During their meeting, Lukashenka shared his opinion that in recent years, Belarus and the EU managed “to make significant progress in their dialogue.”¹

Lukashenka's decision to sign the agreements with the EU on visa facilitation and readmission, adopted on 20 September, became a sort of precursor to his statement. Following many years of negotiations and statements by both sides that the document is “highly ready”, Minsk and Brussels are finally coming very close to the completion of this process. The European side still needs to finalize its internal procedures for signing the agreement and then both sides will have to ratify it. But in any case, Lukashenka's decision makes the moment when tangible progress occurs in the relations between Belarus and the EU highly realistic: the trend towards quantitative improvements in the relations, which was first observed at the end of 2012 (in terms of the higher frequency and level of contacts), will yield the first politically significant result in the form of a palpable agreement.

At the same time, according to Foreign Ministry's spokesman Anatol Hlaz, the draft agreement on readmission, which turned out to be the most difficult one for the negotiators, envisages a two-year transition period for Minsk with respect to the readmission of third-country nationals. Moreover, the draft joint declaration to the agreement enshrines the EU's commitment to provide Belarus with technical and financial support in the implementation of the document.² It is these provisions that have remained

¹ Presentation of credentials, http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vruchenie-veritelnyx-gramot-21989/

² Briefing of the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Belarus, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cd24b21013832b17.html

stumbling blocks for some time. Minsk used to have concerns that without them, the agreements would cause a real threat of the accumulation of large numbers of illegal migrants in the western portions of the country, something that Belarus is not yet ready for technically and financially.

The second highlight of September and October was the two-day visit of Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej to Berlin, which opened with talks with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. Traditionally for that format of the meeting, a broad range of engagement issues in the political, economic and social spheres was addressed. Following the negotiations, the officials announced that they would work on the creation of a special advisory format to develop a strategic vision and specific step-by-step actions in various areas of cooperation. Despite the roundabout nature of the wording of the document, such an agreement looks exciting and quite unconventional. In fact, it is all about the possibility for Minsk and Berlin to have a structured channel of regular communication (a kind of addition to the EU-Belarus Coordination Group format) to one extent or another. The declared goal to develop a strategic vision for the relationship is particularly notable. Given Germany's inevitably growing role in the foreign policy of the entire EU, if these arrangements are put in place, such strategic consultations will be of great importance for the relationship between Minsk and Brussels. They will have to answer the main question: what will these relations look like in the future given Belarus's reluctance to join the EU even in the long term.

Furthermore, the talks resulted in a declaration that the parties would intensify their work with respect to the issues of historical dialogue and reconciliation. Following the agreements of the Belarusian and German presidents in 2018, a joint commission of historians was formed, which will begin its work in early 2020.

The minister's visit also included meetings in the Bundestag, the Office of the Federal Chancellor, the Eastern Committee of the German Economy, and a speech at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). Makiej also gave an interview to *Süddeutsche Zeitung* daily.³

The future of the Eastern Partnership initiative was another important topic for the Belarus-EU framework during the period under review. In early October, Minsk hosted structured consultations with representatives of the authorities and civil society, organized by the EU Delegation. Deputy Foreign Minister Alieh Kraučanka, who oversees Belarus's relations with the EU, spoke at the consultations, focusing on a number of priority interests of Minsk within the Eastern Partnership. Specifically, he proposed:

- to make technology innovation a new priority of the initiative;
- to step up the certification of Belarusian exporters according to the EU standards with a view to ensuring their access to the EU markets;
- to expand the inclusion of partner countries' enterprises in the production chains of the EU-based companies (including through the creation of material incentives for the EU companies, as proposed by the management of European Investment Bank);
- to strengthen cooperation in standardization, metrology, harmonization and mutual recognition of conformity assessment systems and trade facilitation;
- to use economic diplomacy tools on a broader scale;
- to implement the EP's indicative plan to invest in transport infrastructure, including the development of digital transport corridors;
- to adopt similar plans to modernize energy facilities and implement high-tech projects;
- to step up systemic cooperation in border management, including the development of a special "border package", which would include a comprehensive set of relevant infrastructure, regulatory and procedural arrangements;

³ "Wir wollen die Fehler der Ukraine nichtwiederholen", <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/russland-weissrussland-eu-putin-1.4676828-0>

- to approve the list of quantitative targets for work within the Eastern Partnership: reduction of border crossing time to one hour, creation of a certain number of new jobs, and certification of more exporters from partner countries;
- to develop a special program for training students from the EU countries in partner countries;
- to develop educational smart specialization programs on the basis of business universities.

He further recalled other ideas that Minsk voiced previously. They include, for example, the creation of the EaP IT School in Belarus. The minister also spoke about the importance of the engagement between the EU and the EEU and a more active use of the EaP platform to build the awareness of the EU citizens of partner countries and vice versa.⁴

Forecast

The final two months of 2019 are likely to follow the pattern of the current trends in the relations between Belarus and the EU, despite the fact that the parliamentary elections in November will inaugurate a one-year electoral period. The presidential election (which will traditionally have the greatest significance, including in the context of the relationships with European capitals) of 2020 will mark its end. The parliamentary elections, if they should be negatively assessed by the OSCE ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, could spoil the atmosphere of the engagement, but are unlikely to demolish the existing trend.

The realistic scenario is that the visa facilitation and readmission agreements will be signed after New Year, since the EU will need more time to complete its internal procedures (and Christmas holidays will cover half of December).

Also in November, Lukashenka will pay an official visit to Vienna, announced previously, which will be the first full visit of the Belarusian president to the EU in many years. Regardless of the specific results of the visit, it will have an important symbolic and practical meaning and will reflect the progress not only in Belarus's bilateral relations with Austria, but also with the entire European Union. Without prior improvement of the relations with the EU as a whole such a visit would be problematic, as it would arouse opposition from other capitals and Brussels.

⁴ On the participation of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Oleg Kravchenko in structured consultation on Eastern Partnership, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/e594e32c03d213cf.html

Relationship with China

+21



Resulting index: +21

Positive points: +21

Negative points: 0

0

Trends

1. Scheduled meetings of the industry cooperation committees and the working group for the development of the Great Stone China-Belarus Industrial Park were held.
2. Credit cooperation is an apparently active dimension of the engagement.

Developments and processes

During the period under review, Belarusian officials made a number of high-level visits to China. Defense Minister Raŭkoŭ paid an individual visit on 20-22 October. During his stay in China, the minister participated in the Beijing Xiangshan Forum and met with Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe. Other visits were mainly focused on preparations for the China International Import Expo held in Shanghai in early November, and the meeting of the working group for the development of the China-Belarus Industrial Park (visits of Mikalaj Snapkoŭ, Maksim Jermalovič, and Zmicier Kruty).

Deputy Minister of Economy Aliena Piarmínava also visited China a few times to have meetings at the Ministry of Commerce of China centered on the promotion of the industrial park and other projects. During one of her visits, a protocol was signed on quarantine requirements applicable to the export of Belarusian sugar beet pulp to China, whereas the China International Development Cooperation Agency signed a memorandum of support for the development of the Great Stone Industrial Park.

During the period under review, the accreditation of Belarusian fish producers (seven enterprises⁶) in the Chinese market was completed. On 30 October, four companies⁷ were enabled to supply beet pulp to China.

Also in October, it was reported that the Ministry of Finance was not in talks over a loan from the Russian government (up to USD 600 million), but instead sought a loan agreement with China Development Bank (CDB) in renminbi worth about USD 500 million. In addition, Belarusbank managed to procure a EUR 100 million loan to replenish floating capital from the same CDB against security of the Belarusian government. Finance Minister Jermalovič noted on the sidelines of KEF 2019 that Belarus had abandoned the idea of Panda Bonds due to the high cost of this financial instrument.

Great Stone

In October, the park saw the main celebrations of the National Day of the PRC for Chinese companies. Other notable developments included staff changes at the park's administration. Yan Gang became General Director of Industrial Park Development Company CJSC. He took over Mr. Li Haixin, who had served as general director for five years. Yan Gang previously worked for a Singapore- and Hong Kong-based logistics companies before he joined China Merchants.

In September, the Council of Ministers of Belarus adopted KPIs for the expiring year for the head of the CBIP Administration by making additions to the resolution “On socio-economic development targets of the Republic of Belarus for 2019.”⁸ The head of the Administration will definitely be able to make a report on the successful achievement of these indicators.

In October, a regular interdepartmental meeting of the working group for the development of the CBIP was held in Beijing, attended by Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Snapkoŭ, Minister of Economy Kruty, and Minister of Finance Jermalovič. The attendees focused on improving the legal environment and operational conditions in the park, digital construction, and involvement of “anchor” high-tech investors.

In October, the MAZ-Weichai engine-making plant was put into operation. Prior to that, Chairman of the Board of Weichai Group Tan Xuguang met with Speaker of the upper chamber of Belarusian parliament, the Council of the Republic, Michail Miasnikovič, to address the prospects of cooperation with OJSC BelAZ and promotion of joint products in the Chinese market.

The opening of the Belarusian-Chinese police cooperation center at the park became a new area for the development of the CBIP.

In September and October, promotion efforts and numerous roadshows had certain success – the park was named winner of the following awards: Eastern Europe Industrial Project of the Year (Europa Property), New Silk Road Finance Awards 2019 (Asia Money, the best project in Eastern Europe). For the first time, the park was recognized in the FDi Free Zones of the Year 2019 rankings in the Trade Facilitation and Expansions categories.

Schneider Group helped organize some of the European events for the park in the period under review. The CBIP also announced its cooperation with Austria’s Lansky, Ganzger+Partner as a legal advisor to work with European investors. The Belarusian side, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for its part, is increasingly including the park in agendas for visits of foreign delegations of various levels..

Forecast

In the light of the upcoming China International Import Expo in Shanghai, we should expect new agreements on the export of Belarusian products to China and strengthening of regional cooperation in the foreign trade context. The media have already outlined the trend towards regions’ making their own public statements about their export-focused work with a certain region of China.

The administration and the park’s development company have already announced new anticipated residents of the park; however, the extent, to which they can become “anchor” and high-tech residents depends on many factors, even at the regional level – how quickly Belarus will be able to move on to the normalization of its relations with the EU in order to gain access to the EU market; which measures to improve the EEU Belarus will be able to promote as the presiding country in the coming year, in order for goods made in Belarus to be sold in the EEU without obstacles; how successful the attempts to raise financing for the CBIP infrastructure will be. The park is already rather well integrated into the Belt and Road concept and appears in the main documents of the Chinese side associated with this concept; there is certain progress in the western front; however, some issues are difficult to resolve exclusively at the level of the CBIP and resident companies.

Relationship with the U.S.

+12



-2

Resulting index: +10

Positive points: +12

Negative points: -2

Trends

1. The high intensity of diplomatic contacts remains in the run-up to the return of the ambassadors.
2. The U.S. is ready to adopt confidence-building measures in its relations with Belarus.
3. Belarus is interested in cooperation with the U.S. in the energy sector and receives positive signals in return.

Developments and processes

The months of September and October turned out to be quite eventful in the U.S. dimension, even compared with the previous period, when the U.S. national security advisor visited Belarus for the first time. It would be safe to say that this vector of Belarus's foreign policy is gaining momentum and strengthening its importance for the first time in many years.

Visits

During the period under analysis, several important visits took place, which will be of great importance to further expansion of the bilateral relations.

The most notable visit was probably that of United States Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale, who came to Minsk on 17 September. He met with President Lukashenka and Foreign Minister Makiej. The main outcome of that visit was the official announcement of the decision to restore the diplomatic missions at the level of ambassadors, as well as the discussion of further practical steps in this direction. When commenting on the decision, Hale said: "We agree with you that the state of affairs is unnatural, abnormal. We are glad that this chapter is nearly over. We are closing this chapter due to the steps your country and you personally have made. We would also like to note the vision you've accepted – greater diversity in internal affairs and in relations with the outside world. We strongly support this vision and will do our best to help you on the way."¹

On the eve of Hale's visit, on 16 September, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent made his third visit to Belarus this year. Commenting on that visit, the U.S. Embassy focused exclusively on the cultural portion of the program – his visit to Mir. Apparently, Kent was involved in the preparation of Hale's visit to Belarus and dealt with technical matters associated with the opening of the new Embassy of the United States in Minsk.

On 7 October, Deputy Foreign Minister Alieh Kraučanka met with Bradley Freden, Director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, and Hannah Thoburn,

¹ The U.S. and Belarus decided to restore the diplomatic missions at the level of ambassadors (<https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/ssha-i-belarus-prinjali-reshenie-o-vosstanovlenii-dippredstavitelstva-na-urovne-poslov-362371-2019/>)

Senior Staff Member of the Republican Majority of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate of the United States Congress. The meeting focused on Belarus–U.S. relations, including the promotion of cooperation projects in the economy, international security, human rights, and fight against human trafficking.

On 9-19 October, representatives of the U.S. Forest Service Leslie Swada and Mitch Roberts visited Belarus. They addressed Belarusian professionals and students wishing to learn about the U.S.' experience in environmental protection and forest fire prevention. In addition to Minsk, they visited Mahilioŭ, Maladziečna, Naliboki National Landscape Reserve and Biarezina National Biosphere Reserve.

A number of representatives of American think tanks (including former commander of the U.S. Army in Europe Ben Hodges) took part in the second Minsk Dialogue Forum on 7-9 October 2019.

Deputy Foreign Minister Kraŭčanka paid a visit to Washington, D.C., from 29 October to 1 November. He took part in the regular round of the Belarus-U.S. dialogue on human rights, met with Philip Reeker, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Bill Keating, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasia of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. Negotiations were held with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent. During the visit, meetings with representatives of the U.S. analytical community were also organized, according to the established tradition.

Security

The deployment of U.S. troops in Lithuania² in close proximity to the Belarusian border has caused a wave of negativity in the bilateral relations. On 28 October, President Lukashenka held a meeting with Defense Minister Andrej Raŭkoŭ, Secretary of State of the Security Council Stanislau Zas and Chief of the Main Intelligence Directorate Paviel Cichanaŭ, where the commander-in -chief demanded that a response be prepared to that “demonstrative move”. However, this negativity was soon done away with thanks to consultations held between the U.S. Embassy in Minsk and State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus Zas on 29 October at the initiative of the U.S. During the meeting, the U.S. provided clarifications with respect to the purpose of the deployment of U.S. servicemen and military equipment and plans for their stay.

According to Zas, “the time both the NATO leadership and the leading member state took to respond to our questions proves that the voice of Belarus was heard, and our position was taken into account (...) during the conversation, we confirmed the general commitment to reduce concerns over this issue and to ensure the transparency of such decisions in the future.”³

Therefore, these consultations became both evidence of improved confidence between Minsk and Washington and a reflection of their desire to prevent any escalation in the region.

Energy

On 2 September, Chairman of the Board of Miller & Lents Robert J. Oberst visited Homiel. Reports were issued in the follow-up of the visit that Belorusneft intended to engage Miller & Lents specialists to recover difficult oil.

On 26 September, Lukashenka reiterated during a meeting with representatives of the Ukrainian media that Belarus might purchase American oil.

² The U.S. military were deployed at the Pabradė Base in order to participate in NATO's upcoming Defender Europe 2020 exercise, one of the biggest of its kind in the past 25 years. Some 40,000 servicemen will be involved from 18 NATO member states, about half of them from the U.S.

³ <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/gossekreter-soveta-bezopasnosti-golos-belarusi-uslyshan-ssha-i-na-to-367569-2019/>

In early October, United States Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, who was on a visit to Vilnius, said that Lithuania should communicate with both the IAEA and Belarus with respect to the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant project in Astravets, while the U.S. would not be involved in negotiations on this issue. A little later, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Energy Rita Baranwal went on to speak on this topic: "I would say that VVER-type reactors similar to those installed at BelNPP operate safely in the world [...] in the future, American fuel suppliers could partly supply fuel, which is already being done at some power plants around the world."⁴ These statements turned out to be all the tougher on the Lithuanian side, because previously the press service of the Lithuanian government reported that Rick Perry had vowed his support for Lithuanian Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis in Lithuania's opposition against the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant.⁵

Return of the ambassadors

In an interview with an independent media outlet Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej said that the candidacy of a Belarusian diplomat for the position of the ambassador to the U.S. would be submitted for approval to the president and the U.S. most likely in 2020. According to him, this procedure will take longer in the U.S. He also spoke about the possibility of desynchronized return of the ambassadors – this practice currently exists in the relations between Belarus and a number of other countries. Commenting on the prospect of a new U.S. Embassy building in Minsk, the minister said that, given the tightened security requirements for the U.S. Embassy buildings after the terrorist attack in Benghazi (Libya) in 2012, Belarus offered the U.S. four sites for construction to choose from. The U.S. is currently studying these proposals.

Rhetoric

On 17 September, Aliaksandr Lukashenka said at a meeting with United States Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale that the United States of America could contribute to the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine: "As for Europe's problems, especially those of Eastern Europe, in particular Ukraine, I am absolutely convinced that without the involvement of the U.S., this conflict will not be resolved."

On 26 September, Lukashenka told Ukrainian journalists at a meeting in Minsk that "Belarus is trying to normalize its relations with the U.S. through dialogue." At the same time, he stressed that Belarus was not going to "be friends with anyone against Russia."⁶

In an interview with Radio Voice of America on 27 September, Makiej called the relations with the U.S. "very important" as "the United States is the number one power in the world, and any country should have normal relations with it. He also noted that "it is a big prospective market for Belarusian products", therefore for Belarus "primarily trade and economic relations, political dialogue with the United States are of great importance."⁷ The same focus was visible in his interview with Russia's RBC.⁸

4 The U.S. could supply fuel to Belarusian NPP – U.S. Assistant Secretary of Energy, https://interfax.by/news/policy/vneshnyaya_politika/1265516/

5 Premjeras: svarbutoliaustiprintistrateginepartnerystesu JAV, <http://lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/premjeras-svarbu-toliaustiprinti-strategine-partneryste-su-jav>

6 Lukashenka: Belarus wishes to normalize relations with the U.S., but we are not standing on our knees, <https://112.ua/mir/lukashenko-belarus-hochet-normalizovat-otnosheniya-s-ssha-no-my-ne-polzaem-na-kolenyah-508858.html>

7 Interview of Foreign Minister of Belarus U. Makiej Voice of America Radio Company (27 September 2019, New York), <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/aa18dc746d8633aa.html>

8 Verbatim of the interview of Foreign Minister of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej to RBC news service, <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/e10b3b4ae2218f5a.html>

In turn, David Hale said at a briefing after his meeting with Lukashenka on 17 September that the United States was ready to discuss further easing of sanctions against Belarus. He stressed that the U.S. “remains committed to supporting the sovereignty and independence of Belarus where next generations will have a successful future.” The United States also welcomes Belarus’s increased cooperation on issues of non-proliferation, border security, economic cooperation, and information sharing on matters of shared security. Hale also made an important highlight on the motives of the U.S. policy: “by normalizing our relationship, we are not asking Belarus to choose between East and West. The United States respects Belarus’s desire to chart its own course and to contribute to peace and stability in the region.”⁹ This marks a significant change in Washington’s rhetoric that occurred after the events in Ukraine, and it fully reflects the point of the Belarusian authorities about their unwillingness to find themselves in a situation of forced choice.

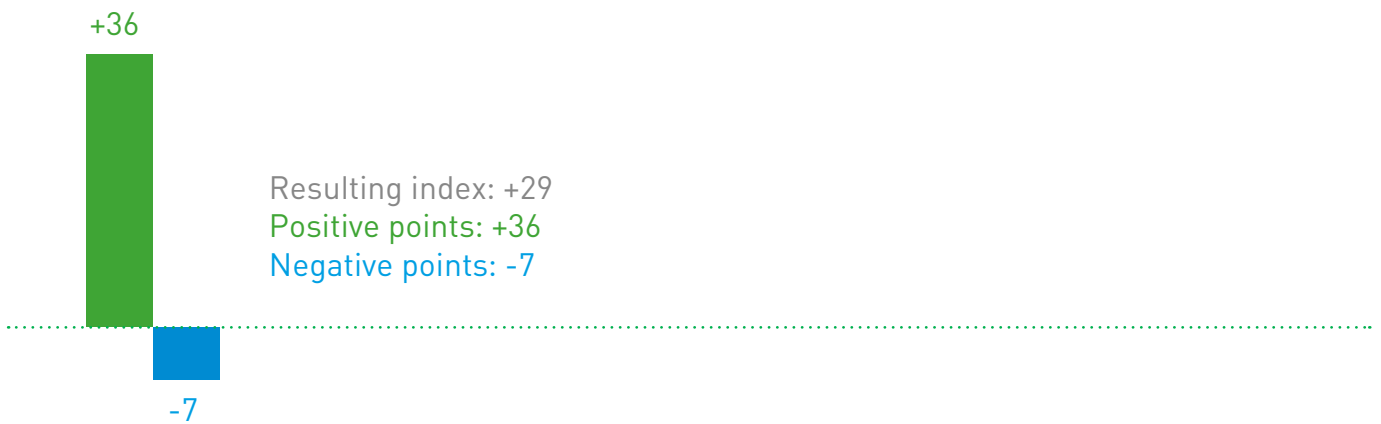
During the period under review the U.S. extended the suspension of its sanctions against several Belarusian enterprises. In this regard, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry released a comment in which, on the one hand, it condemned the practice of applying sanctions, whereas on the other hand, it noted certain progress because the sanctions were suspended for a year and a half, rather than for a year, as was the case last time.

Forecast

The relationship with the United States remains highly volatile and vulnerable to many factors, including those external. Among others, bilateral cooperation will be influenced by the process of so-called “deep integration” with Russia. The main milestone here will be the day of 8 September, when Minsk and Moscow are likely to sign some Union State agreements. In case of a slowdown of integration processes in the eastern dimension, the Belarusian leadership will continue to search for foreign political and foreign economic alternatives. In this case, the normalization of relations with Washington will gain momentum. In the next three to six months, trial deliveries of U.S. crude to Belarus should not be ruled out – they are designed to demonstrate such an alternative and strengthen Minsk’s bargaining position in the east.

⁹ The U.S. is not asking Belarus to make its choice between the East and the West – Hale, <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/ssha-ne-prosjat-belarus-delat-vybor-mezhdu-vostokom-i-zapadom-hejl-362393-2019/>

Relationship with Ukraine



Trends

1. The parties managed to ultimately resolve some of the conflict topics and demonstrated in practice the contours of new approaches to future dialogue.
2. A trend towards rationalizing contacts and developing long-term joint projects has become visible.

Developments and processes

Politics

September 2019 started with the statement by Aliaksandr Lukashenka that Belarus had to “shut tight” the border with Ukraine.¹ This news was widely disseminated by the Ukrainian media, often with quite panicky interpretations. The lack of additional communication from the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and the expert community created a point of tension.

The story could have caused a new negative media campaign, but the topic was neutralized by the exchange of prisoners between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, when the Ukrainian citizen Pavlo Gryb, who had been kidnapped in Homiel, got back home. The interview of the young man, in which he shared his confidence that he had been kidnapped by Russian security services², along with the fact of his release, could be perceived as a positive development for the bilateral framework, as it removed a sore point that had been regularly raised at the political and diplomatic levels.

Other developments of September, which provoked a negative response, include the voting of the Belarusian delegation in the UN against the inclusion of the discussion of the Ukrainian resolution on Crimea and Donbas³ in the agenda of the 74th session of the General Assembly, as well as the military exercises held in Rivne Region, based on the scenario envisaging an attack from the Belarusian territory.⁴

1 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/2772343-bilorus-nagluho-zakrila-kordon-z-ukrainou-lukasenka.html>

2 <https://tsn.ua/ru/ukrayina/ya-ponimal-riski-no-ne-dumal-chto-shvatyat-iz-za-kakoy-to-erundy-osvobozhdenny-iz-plena-grib-rasskazal-o-zaderzhanii-v-belarusi-1410165.html>

3 <https://www.depo.ua/ukr/politics/bratnya-bilorus-v-oon-znovu-progolosuvala-proti-ukraini-201909171029749>

4 <https://www.5.ua/regiony/nastupaty-i-vidbyvaty-ataky-voroaha-na-rivnenshchyni-proishly-masshtabni-navchannia-artylerystiv-video-178067.html>

Against this background, positive contacts at the ministerial and governmental levels continued. It is extremely important that the high rate of contacts was maintained amid the change of government in Ukraine.

On 26 September, Belarus made an important step in order to achieve a change in the tonality of the coverage of the Belarus-Ukraine relations in the media of the neighboring state – a press tour was organized for journalists of the leading Ukrainian media, where they, among other things, had a chance to communicate with President Lukashenko and ask him questions.⁵ This made Belarus the top-news for the Ukrainian media space for almost the entire day. Lukashenko's responses and statements, including those regarding high-profile topics, were positively received in Ukraine.

On 3 October, the Second Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine began in Zhytomyr⁶, where Lukashenko paid an official visit and met with President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky. On the sidelines of the forum, the following events were held:

- a regular meeting of the Ukraine-Belarus Advisory Council for the Promotion of Business Cooperation,
- a meeting (in Kyiv) of Minister of Culture of Ukraine Volodymyr Borodiansky with Minister of Culture of Belarus Jury Bondar,
- negotiations and the signing of cooperation agreements between five regions of Belarus and Ukrainian regions,
- a plan of consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Ukraine was signed,
- the State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine signed an executive program of scientific, technical and innovation cooperation for 2019-2022.

Furthermore, the forum resulted in the announcement of plans to implement joint projects in industrial cooperation, as well as in three areas that are of extreme importance for Belarus:

- cooperation in the energy sector having in mind the upcoming commissioning of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant,
- a project to restore shipping traffic on the Dnieper River, primarily in the Black Sea–Nižnija Žary–the Pripyat River section,
- joint work in missile construction – primarily cooperation between the military-industrial complexes of the two countries.

On the eve of the forum, another significant event took place – the exchange of the Ukrainian national Sharoiko for the Belarusian national Palityka – and the “spy scandal” finally came to an end. The Ukrainian citizen who returned to his homeland expressed gratitude to the presidents of the two countries for the organization of the exchange.⁷

Active contacts at the working level continued after the end of the Forum of the Regions. On 8 October, Ambassador of Belarus to Ukraine Ihar Sokal met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Vasyl Bodnar. Practical aspects of the implementation of the agreements reached in Zhytomyr were discussed. On 10 October, President Lukashenko invited his counterpart Zelensky to visit Belarus in the near future. On 11 October, the Belarusian president called on the participants in the summit of the CIS leaders to “support the new government in Ukraine.”⁸ On 29-30 October, a delegation of the Ministry of Defense of

5 <https://www.belta.by/president/view/vstrecha-prezidenta-belarusi-aleksandra-lukashenko-s-predstaviteljami-ukrainskih-smi-obnovljaetsja-363467-2019/>

6 <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ii-forum-regionov-belarusi-i-ukrainy-prohodit-v-zhitomire-364313-2019/>

7 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/2793489-sarajko-podakuvav-zelenskomu-i-lukashenku-za-zvilnenna.html>

8 <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-na-sammite-sng-prizval-podderzhat-dejstvujuschuju-vlast-v-ukraine-365350-2019/>

Belarus visited Kyiv. The purpose of the visit was to have a working meeting focusing on the implementation of the agreement “on additional confidence-building measures” between the two countries.⁹

Economy

Even before the Forum of the Regions of Belarus and Ukraine a number of important events in the economic sector took place: Brest Road Construction Trust No. 4 announced a fourfold increase in its export of services to Ukraine; on 2 October, the Zhytomyr authorities announced the purchase of 49 Belarusian trolleybuses using the loan they took from the EBRD; companies of the Belarusian oil sector agreed to export drilling and exploration services to the Ukrainian state-owned company Ukrhazvydobuvannya amounting to over USD 400 million. The Forum of the Regions resulted in USD 542 million worth of product sale agreements.¹⁰

In mid-October, a Belarusian road-making company signed a record-breaking contract for the repair and modernization of roads in Ukraine. The report was made by the journalistic investigation resource Nashi Groshi with reference to the Prozorro public procurement service.¹¹ This fact confirms the forecast we made at the end of 2018 about the possibility for Belarusian road organizations to enter the growing market for the construction and modernization of roads in Ukraine as a major player.

Negative signals in the economic segment over the past two months include the following notable developments: the extension of the period of the anti-dumping investigation with respect to metal fittings from Belarus and the statement made by the Ukrainian company UIA that it would cease flights to Belarus.

Therefore, the overall result of economic engagement between the two countries should obviously be interpreted with a positive mark, but it is far from being breakthrough collaboration. Some of the anticipated contracts had been promoted towards the signing phase at the Forum of the Regions. There were no breakthrough deals, except for the USD 400 million contracts in the gas sector for Ukrhazvydobuvannya.

On the other hand, Belarus started to enter the electricity market of the neighboring country, and the very nature of the agreements at the top level suggests that new large-scale projects in scientific and technical, industrial and logistics cooperation between the two countries may be achieved during the next 12 months.

Forecast

During the final months of 2019, the relationship will evolve in accordance with the logic established by the Forum of the Regions of Belarus and Ukraine. The intensity of working contacts in the political and economic spheres is likely to remain high. Such contacts are necessitated by the logic of “roadmaps” developed for the implementation of the agreements reached in Zhytomyr.

Important areas that should be monitored include:

- relations in industrial cooperation, specifically the development (and creation) of joint ventures manufacturing automotive and agricultural machinery,

⁹ <https://www.belta.by/society/view/voennye-belarusi-i-ukrainy-obsudjat-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasti-kontrolja-nad-vooruzhenijami-367357-2019/>

¹⁰ <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/delovye-krugi-belarusi-i-ukrainy-podpisali-neskolko-desjatkov-dokumentov-na-summu-bolee-500-mln-364372-2019/>

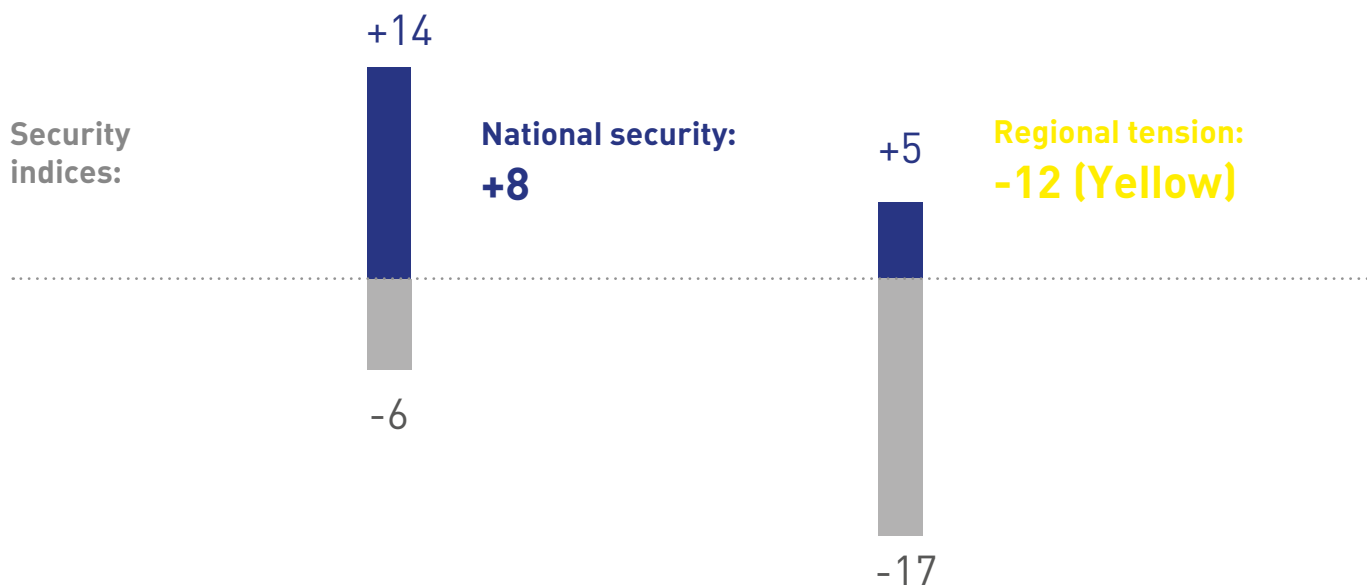
¹¹ <http://nashigroshi.org/2019/10/16/bilorusy-vzialy-rekordnyy-dlia-sebe-pidriad-na-budivnytstvo-dorohy-za-746-mil-yoniv-zbyvshy-tsinu-na-9/>

- progress of the Ukrainian electricity market reform and opportunities for Belarusian suppliers to enter this market. The situation appears to be quite favorable, especially in the wake of the introduction of 2% duties on electricity supplies from Russia to Ukraine,
- development of the logistics component, namely, the reform of the road construction and maintenance sector in Ukraine, creation of mechanisms for launching projects for the restoration of inland water transport (shipping on the Dnieper River).

The Ukrainian oil pipeline system deserves a separate mention, especially the Odessa-Brody line, which may become a key one for prospective crude supplies to Belarus from Kazakhstan.



Security Barometer: status of national and regional security



Trends

1. Belarus made significant efforts to enhance national security amid the deteriorated situation in the region fuelled by key actors’ attempts to ensure their security at each other’s expense.
2. As the situation around Belarus is getting worse, Minsk opts for stepped up cooperation with Moscow to a certain extent.
3. In order to avoid the growing dependence on Moscow in the defense sector, Minsk is revising its security architecture, seeking to gain means and capabilities to inflict “irreparable damage” at the regional level from Moldova, and NATO and its key members and partners were promoting their security cooperation with Belarus, communicating at the highest level.

1. National security

Overall status of national security

The Belarusian leadership's rhetoric was getting harsher. At the international counter-terrorism conference held on 3 September in Minsk, President Lukashenka spoke about the threats associated with the termination of the INF Treaty. He said that Minsk was not going to manufacture or deploy such missiles "if there is no threat to Belarus's security", and "the situation had not go that far yet."¹

In his speech at the international conference "European Security: Stepping Back from the Brink", Lukashenka refrained from categorical criticism of the parties to regional confrontation, urging them to "get back to the European security concept based on cooperation." He proposed "to adopt a strategic document on strengthening international security in the Euro-Atlantic region and beyond." "Today, it is impossible to resolve these issues without China. Positions of other countries must be taken into account as well," he said.²

His rhetoric changed in October. At the CIS summit held on 11 October in Ashgabat, Lukashenka voiced concerns about the upcoming "odd" NATO's Defender-2020 exercise near the Belarusian border. Several decisions were made at the session of the joint board of the Defense Ministries of Belarus and Russia on 25 October, to which Minsk probably agreed given the objectively deteriorating regional military-political situation and the way the Kremlin perceived it. According to Russian sources, "close attention was paid to further buildup of the Belarusian-Russian regional group of forces." The two countries decided to amend the plan for its application, adopted and put in place a joint regulatory document on the basics of the application of the joint regional group, and approved resolutions for the development of the integrated radio-electronic combat system and the joint regional air defense system of Russia and Belarus.³

When receiving a report on the current military and political situation by State Secretary of the Security Council Stanislau Zas, Defense Minister Andrej Raŭkoŭ and head of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff (GRU) Paviel Cichanaŭ on 28 October, the president commented on the upcoming major NATO exercise and deployment of American troops. He called the latter "insignificant, yet setting a dangerous precedent." Therefore, "we cannot but respond, and we must understand that we should not rattle the saber."

Lukashenka addressed his criticism mainly to the Lithuanian, rather than the American leadership, and on 22 October, ordered to think over an adequate response. "We have enough force and means to respond asymmetrically... Everyone should understand: if they are going to wage war on us, we will be guided by our ability to inflict irreparable damage on them... We have enough weapons for that," he said.⁴

After the meeting with the president, Defense Minister Raŭkoŭ told reporters that the measures of response basically comprised arms control, inspections, and expansion of the scope of tasks set to military intelligence along with the reinforcement of the border and "the troops on the border with Lithuania", as well as "some tactical actions" that will be taken by various branches of the armed forces. Informational and diplomatic efforts are also

1 Participation in the International Conference on Combating Terrorism, September 3, 2019 http://president.gov.by/by/news_by/view/udzel-u-mizhnarodnaj-kanferentsyi-pa-baratsbe-z-teraryzmam-21911/

2 Participation in the international conference "European Security: Stepping Back from the Brink", October 8, 2019 http://president.gov.by/by/news_by/view/udzel-u-mizhnarodnaj-kanferentsyi-eurapejskaja-bjaspeka-adystsi-ad-kraju-bezdani-22178/

3 Russia and Belarus united in their effort to strengthen military cooperation to ensure the security of the Union State 10/25/2019 25.10.2019, https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12258605@egNews

4 Report on the military-political situation, 28 October 2019 http://president.gov.by/by/news_by/view/daklad-ab-vaenna-palitychnaj-abstanoutsy-22275/

planned to be put in place. According to Raŭkoŭ, Minsk and Moscow planned to revise the plan for the application of the joint regional group next year anyway based on the most recent developments, including the joint monitoring of NATO exercises.

According to the minister, it was not the Defender Europe exercise that raised concern, but NATO's "permanent force buildup." Besides, as he said, "we never keep troops at training grounds for half a year when we conduct exercises in our territory, but they do this time. We believe this is unacceptable."⁵

On the whole, Belarus pursues its defense policy autonomously from Russia towards army reform in accordance with its national defense priorities.

President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky said at a press conference on 10 October that during the Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine in Zhytomyr he told President of Belarus Lukashenka that Ukraine was very afraid that Russian troops would be deployed in Belarus. "He assured me that only Belarusian military were there, because they also fear this possibility," Zelensky said.⁶

On 19 October, the Belarusian leadership approved the inclusion of the period of military service in the employment history, on which the size of retirement pensions depends. The move is considered to be an incentive for conscripts.⁷

Border shared with Ukraine

Speaking at the conference on combating terrorism on 3 September, Lukashenka said that Belarus had to "shut tight" the border with Ukraine "because of the inflow of weapons." The State Border Service of Ukraine said in response that since early 2019, the number of attempts to smuggle weapons across the Belarusian-Ukrainian border decreased by 40% from the same period in 2018. Forty pieces of weapons were seized, including one piece of firearm.⁸ The situation is not entirely clear. Later, State Customs Committee chief Jury Senko reported that Belarusian security agencies detected weapon smuggling channels from Ukraine to Russia via Lithuania, and that a large number of weapons showed up in Russia.⁹

Army training

Belarus is developing its military education system without much publicity. It was announced in September that the General Staff department of the Military Academy had begun the operational-tactical training of finance and medical personnel. This education was previously only available in Russia.¹⁰

Belarus continued building up territorial defense. A seminar for heads of district executive committees and chief enlistment officers of the Minsk Region was held in mid-September in the Puchavičy District. A territorial defense exercise was organized in late October at the Grodno regional enlistment office and the training ground of the Western Operational

5 Raŭkoŭ on response measures to NATO exercises to be taken by Belarus 28/10/2019 <https://blr.belta.by/society/view/raukou-raskazau-jakija-mery-reagavannja-pryme-belarus-na-vuchenni-nata-82499-2019/>

6 Belarus accepts tens of thousands of migrants from Donbas - Zelensky 10/10/2019 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/2797074-bilorus-prijnala-desatki-tisac-pereselenciv-iz-donbasu-zelenskij.html>

7 Period of military service to be included in employment history, 19/10/2019 <https://www.mil.by/ru/news/94064/>

8 State Border Guard Service of Ukraine responds to Lukashenka's statement regarding "arms inflow" across border September 3, 2019, TUT.BY, <https://news.tut.by/economics/652042.html>

9 State Customs Committee head on weapons and ammunition smuggling from Ukraine to Russia via Belarus, September 16, 2019, TUT.BY <https://news.tut.by/economics/653759.html>

10 Knowledge Day at General Staff Department, September 3, 2019, https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/vremya_sobytiya_lyudi/the_day_of_knowledge_at_the_faculty_of_the_general_staff/

Command. So far, emphasis has been put on the training of territorial defense executives. More than 40 chairs and deputy chairs of executive committees took classes at the Military Academy in 2018. At the same time, only around 400 of those liable for military service have been sent to boot camps this year. The territorial defense leadership assures that “the emphasis will shift in 2020 to training assemblies and classes at enlistment offices.”¹¹

September and October saw several major international exercises, in which Belarusian military took part. The Combat Commonwealth-2019 exercise with the CIS joint air defense was held on 2-6 September at the Ashuluk training ground in Russia. It involved over 2,000 personnel and around 200 military hardware units, including 60 aircraft of Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Belarus sent five Yak-130 jets and two S-300PS air defense squadrons. The military practiced the joint application of allied air force and air defense of the CIS in anti-terror operations and during armed hostilities.

The Belarusian-Russian Union Shield-2019 operational exercise was held on 13-19 September in the Nizhny Novgorod Region of Russia under the supervision of Chief of General Staff of Belarus Alieh Bielakonieŭ. It involved 12,000 personnel and nearly 950 hardware units. Belarus delegated over 4,000 servicemen (conscripts, contract soldiers and reservists), 30 tanks, 80 armored combat vehicles, 50 multiple launch rocket systems, cannons and mortars, and 15 planes and helicopters.¹² Units of the North-West Operational Command of Belarus performed tasks in cooperation with Russia’s 1st tank army.

The troops rehearsed actions aimed at suppressing attempts to destabilize the situation in the designated areas of responsibility, and actions against sabotage and reconnaissance groups and militants.

A joint tactical exercise with the Osa air defense systems of the 740th and 147th anti-aircraft missile regiments took place in late September. The military practiced shooting down cruise missiles and fire support helicopters.

In early October, the Asipovičy training ground hosted a live firing tactical exercise with a cannon-propelled artillery battalion of the 51st artillery brigade. The program included the elimination of targets at the range from 3 to 7 km, changing of firing positions, protection and defense of staging areas, and holding off attacks of sabotage and reconnaissance groups.

A series of training events with the Collective Rapid Reaction Force took place on 8-29 October at six training grounds in Russia, Belarus and Tajikistan consecutively as part of the Combat Commonwealth exercise. The military practiced two-front warfare: localization of a near-border conflict on the one side, and counteraction to extremist organizations and illegal armed groups on the other. The six participating countries delegated about 10,000 troops in total.

The event began with the first ever held Echelon-2019 exercise with logistical support units of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in the Nizhny Novgorod Region of Russia (900 personnel and 250 hardware units in total).

It was followed by the Search-2019 exercise at four training grounds of Belarus on 14-18 October to work on border conflict management by the CSTO reconnaissance units (2,000 personnel and 250 hardware units of six CSTO member states) in collaboration with the police and the Emergency Situations Ministry of Belarus.

The Interaction-2019 command and staff training session for the Collective Rapid Reaction Force commanders was held on 16-18 October in the Nizhny Novgorod Region. Belarus delegated an immediate response group of the Ministry of Defense, a unit of the 103rd airborne special operations brigade and a unit of the 927th Unmanned Aircraft Systems Training and Application Center. The military worked on joint operations to maintain

¹¹ Territorial defense of the Republic of Belarus — current status, 31 August 2019, https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/bo-evaya_podgotovka/territorial_defence/

¹² Start signal received! September 14, 2019 https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/shchit_soyuza_2019/the_start_is_given/

stability in the collective security region and countering extremist organizations that threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one of the CSTO member states.

The Unbreakable Brotherhood-2019 joint anti-terror exercise held on 21-29 October in Tajikistan was the final stage of the CRRF training. Belarus was represented by a peacekeeping company of the 103rd airborne brigade.

A special tactical exercise with unit 89417 of the special operations brigade took place presumably on 8-23 October in the Mahilioŭ and Homiel Regions under the supervision of Special Operations Force Commander Vadzim Dzienisienka. The program included airborne landing, reconnaissance and recapture of a designated facility (the Babrujsk airfield).

A bilateral command and staff exercise with the 6th and 11th infantry brigades of the Western Operational Command was held in mid-October at the Hoža training ground.

A joint tactical battalion exercise was held on 20-25 October near Brest. It involved a reinforced airborne assault battalion of the 38th airborne assault brigade of Belarus and a reinforced airborne regiment of the 106th airborne division of Russia (900 personnel, 250 units of military and special equipment, and a dozen transport aircraft of Russia and Belarus). The troops rehearsed the landing of personnel and equipment, reconnaissance operations behind enemy lines, live firing and a target practice of the ground attack air force. The Russian troops were in the majority, although it was initially reported that Russia would only send one airborne battalion.¹³

The combat readiness of the air force and air defense was checked presumably on 21-24 October. Air crews and units of anti-aircraft missile and radio-radar troops took part in the exercise in accordance with the army training plan.¹⁴

Equipment of the national army

On 23 September, President Lukashenka heard a report by State Military-Industrial Committee Chief Raman Haloŭčanka and said that Belarus was set against the deployment of short- and intermediate- range missiles in the region. "Since we are in this boiling pot, in a political flash point, we just cannot neglect our security." He dwelled again on the medium-range missiles of Belarusian design and the plan to create more powerful weapons. "A possibility of increasing the range and combat capacities of our missiles, employing the experience of Belarus's partners, primarily China, was considered."¹⁵

According to official sources, during the talks with President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky on 4 October, Lukashenka suggested joining efforts in missile engineering. "We did not have this manufacture experience, but you do. We would appreciate your assistance. If you help us, we will implement our project, a joint one, in a year and a half or two years. If you do not, it will take four to five years and consume more money."¹⁶

International contacts of the Belarusian army and security agencies

Deputy Director of the Equipment Development Department of the Central Military Commission of China Liu Sheng visited Belarus on 14-16 September.

13 Joint Belarus-Russia exercise at Brest training ground 11/10/2019, <https://www.mil.by/ru/news/93673/>

14 Inspection of air force and air defense completed 25/10.2019 <https://www.mil.by/ru/news/94243/>

15 Report by State Military-Industrial Committee Chairman Raman Haloŭčanka September 23, 2019 http://president.gov.by/by/news_by/view/daklad-ctarshyni-dzjarzhaunaga-vaenna-pramyslovaga-razdelit-po-vertikalikamiteta-ramana-galouchanki-22054/

16 Belarus proposes Ukraine to set up joint production 05/10/2019, <http://www.zviazda.by/be/news/20191004/1570190984-belarus-prapanue-ukraine-stvarac-sumesnyya-pradpryemstv>

On 21-24 September, Chief of General Staff of Belarus Alieh Bielakonieŭ made an official visit to Armenia.

On 16 October, Nur-Sultan hosted the 10th meeting of the Military-Technical Cooperation Sub-Commission of the Belarus-Kazakhstan Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation.

On 20-23 October, the minister of defense of Belarus took part in the 9th Beijing Xiangshan Security Forum.

A Signal Corps delegation led by Chief Signal Officer Alieh Miščenka visited Kazakhstan on 21-24 October.

Defense Minister Raŭkoŭ took part in a session of the Council of CIS Defense Ministers in Azerbaijan on 29-30 October.

2. Regional Security

Overall situation in the region

A certain improvement was observed in the east of Ukraine. On 1 October, for the first time since the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements was signed in 2015, the Trilateral Contact Group on the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Donbas managed to reach an agreement on the Steinmeier Formula and the separation of the parties to the conflict. This opens up a possibility of holding a Normandy Four summit and discussing further steps to resolve the conflict. In October, the Ukrainian leadership attempted to continue the withdrawal of forces in the east of the country.

On 19 September, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a letter to several countries and organizations, including NATO’s Stoltenberg and the EU, proposing a moratorium on the deployment of short- and intermediate- range missiles, and stated his willingness to discuss verification measures. On 25 September, NATO officially called his proposal “unrealistic.”

It became known on 27 October that U.S. President Donald Trump endorsed the decision to withdraw from the 1992 Open Skies Treaty. The White House had talked about this before, pointing to violations of the Treaty committed by Russia. The Treaty provides for inspection flights over the partners’ territories.

Exercises and confidence-building measures in the region

Over the period under review, Russia conducted nine large exercises, and the other countries conducted eight. (See Table 1). The information on the exercises provided by Russia and Poland may be incomplete.

Table 1. Exercises in the region

Date	Location	Name and subject	Scale	Note
Around 2-4 September	Russia, Kaliningrad Region	Bilateral tactical exercise of the Baltic Fleet Corpse	Over 1,500 personnel, 300 hardware units	Supervised by Baltic Fleet Commander Alexander Nosatov
4-13 September	Lithuania, Pabradė	Engineer Thunder 2019	Unknown	Lithuanian units, combat engineer units of Latvia, Poland, the U.S., units of the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup Lithuania
Early September	Russia, Leningrad Region	No name	Over 1,000 personnel, about 200 units of military and special-purpose equipment	Infantry battalion of Serbia, units of a motorized infantry brigade, army aviation brigade and engineer regiment of Russia
Early September	Russia, Baltic Fleet	Tactical exercise of the Baltic Fleet’s naval aviation	15 Su-27 jets	
9-29 September	Latvia, Latgale	Zobens 2019	Over 1,000 servicemen, militiamen, border guards and policemen	Zemessardze, land forces, police and border guard of Latvia, Lithuanian and Estonian troops
24-30 (?) September	Entire Ukraine	Kozatska Volya strategic command and staff exercise	Around 10,000 troops, defense and security agencies	

MINSK BAROMETER: Monitoring of foreign policy and regional security

№ 11 (September and October 2019)

Date	Location	Name and subject	Scale	Note
13-28 September	Ukraine, Lviv Region	Rapid Trident 2019	Around 3,700 troops	National Guard of Ukraine, contingents of 14 NATO members and partners, incl. U.S.
23-27 September	Russia, Pskov Region	No name	Over 1,500 troops	Exercise with an air assault regiment of the Pskov air assault corps
23 September to 6 October	Latvia	Silver Arrow–2019	3,000 troops, including 500 foreign servicemen of 11 NATO member states	Units of Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and the NATO Battlegroup stationed in Latvia led by Canada
25-26 September	Russia, Leningrad Region	No name	Over 1,500 troops, 600 hardware units	Tank regiment of the combined arms army of the Western Military District of Russia
Late September	Russia, Baltic Fleet	Combat readiness check	Around 3,000 troops, 20 warships and support vessels, planes, helicopters, etc.	
27 September to 4 October	Russia, Moscow Region	Bilateral regiment tactical exercise of the tank army of the Western military district	Over 1,000 troops, 400 hardware units	
30 September to 11 October	Lithuania	Gintarinė strėlė 2019/2	Air defense battalion	
16-20 October	Russia, Kaliningrad Region	Exercise with units of the Baltic Fleet Corps	Unknown	
Late October – early November	Estonia	Tractable 2019; redeployment strength of troops and equipment from the UK to Estonia by sea, land and air	Around 800 troops and 200 hardware units	Estonian army, police and militia, British army and Navy
28-31 October	Russia, Moscow Region	Regiment tactical exercise	Around 800 troops, 300 hardware units	
28 October to 8 November	Ukraine, Zhytomyr Region	Multinational Maple Arch 2019 exercise	Unknown	Airborne troops of Ukraine, 300 personnel from Georgia, Canada, Lithuania, Poland, Macedonia and Montenegro
28 October to 10 November	Latvia	Furious Axe	Latvian units, 500 foreign troops	Units of the Latvian armed forces and the British-led NATO Battlegroup in Estonia

Furthermore, the situation in the region was affected by NATO's Steadfast Noon secret exercise on the application of fighter aircraft-borne tactical nuclear weapons in Germany and the Netherlands in mid-October.¹⁷

Belarus organized nine confidence building events (see Table 2).

¹⁷ Geheime Bündnisübung „Steadfast-Noon“: Bundeswehr trainiert mit Nato-Partnern Verteidigung mit Atomwaffen 18.10.2019 <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/geheime-buendnisuebung-steadfast-noon-bundeswehr-trainiert-mit-nato-partnern-verteidigung-mit-atomwaffen/25129772.html?ticket=ST-67519923-C3alb-BIAQGcBGuluY1ad-ap4>

Table 2. Confidence-building measures under bilateral agreements on the confidence- and security-building measures in supplement to the Vienna Document 2011, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Treaty on Open Skies

Date of inspection	Composition of the delegation	State subject to inspection	Note
2-5 September	USA, Czech Republic	Belarus, Russia	Under the Open Skies Treaty
10-13 September	Belarus	Germany	Under the Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence and Security-Building Measures
12 September	Belarus, Russia	Poland	Under the Open Skies Treaty
23-27 September	Belarus, Ukraine	Italy	Under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
23-27 September	Romania, USA, Ukraine	Belarus, Russia	Under the Open Skies Treaty
2 October	Belarus	Latvia	Observation of the Silver Arrow-2019 NATO exercise
13-14 October	Belarus	Germany	Observation of the French-German Feldberg-2019 exercise
15-17 October	Belarus	Ukraine	Under the Agreement on Additional Confidence- and Security-Building Measures
21-25 October	Germany, Hungary, Denmark, Poland	Belarus	Under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
29-30 October	-	-	Belarus-Ukraine task meeting on the intergovernmental Agreement on Additional Confidence- and Security-Building Measures

Military presence in the region

A U.S. tank battalion (500 troops, 30 tanks and 25 infantry fighting vehicles) began deployment in Pabradė, Lithuania, near the Belarusian border, on 21 October as part of the U.S. Operation Atlantic Resolve. They will stay there until spring 2020. Lithuanian Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis said, “We are consistently and patiently striving to expand the long-term U.S. military presence in Lithuania and throughout the region. Therefore, the arrival of this U.S. Army battalion is good news, the result of our long-term efforts and investments.” He said Lithuania had previously hosted U.S. battalions in military exercises. This time, the American troops will stay for quite a long period of time.¹⁸ In fact, the United States has sent its units to Lithuania ten times since 2014 on a rotational basis, last time in 2017. It looks like Karoblis may have spoken about some plans for a more substantial American presence in the country.

A German submarine arrived at the Klaipėda seaport in Lithuania on 18-21 September for the first time since 2001. In recent years, Germany has been expanding its military presence in the region, including at sea, for which purpose it is rebuilding infrastructure for its Navy. On 10 October, German Minister of Defense Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said that since the INF Treaty had been terminated, Berlin does not rule out the possibility of expanding its military presence in the Baltic States. The defense ministers of Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark and Germany met on 25 October in Brussels to consider the arrangement of the NATO

18 | Lietuvą atvyksta JAV rotacinės pajėgos – apie 500 karių 2019.09.25 https://kam.lt/lt/naujienos_874/aktualijos_875/i_lietuva_atvyksta_jav_rotacines_pajegos_apie_500_kariu.html

Headquarters Multinational Division North. Germany joined the protocol of intent to set up the headquarters.

On 23 September, U.S. Presidents Trump and Polish President Duda signed a declaration on stepping up defense cooperation, which formalized the agreements on the deployment of about a thousand American soldiers in Poland. The ceremony of the opening of the headquarters of the American infantry division in Poznan took place on 4 October. Warsaw spends considerable funds on the army, which contributes to improving its relationship with Washington, because a large part of Poland's money goes to American defense industry companies. On 10 October, Polish Minister of Defense Mariusz Blaszczak signed the Technical Modernization Plan that provides for the allocation of the unprecedented amount of PLN 524 billion (over USD 136 billion) on defense in 2021-2035.

Poland makes efforts to increase the strength of its army. In mid-September, it started the formation of seven more infantry battalions of the territorial forces. Troops are being placed in the areas where they had not been present for a long while. The formation of a regiment in Łomża was solemnly announced on 17 September. A battalion of the 18th infantry division was officially sent to Biła Podlaska on 22 September to reinstate a garrison in the area of residence of the Belarusian diaspora near the Belarusian border.

It was officially stated on 19 October that the leadership of Ukraine is going to spend the largest ever amount of UAH 245.8 billion (approx. USD 8.72 billion) or over in 2020 (a 16.1% increase from 2019) to ensure "defense capabilities and security." Around UAH 30 billion (approx. USD 1.06 billion) will be allocated for the purchase and upgrade of military equipment.

It was reported in September that American special operation forces are stationed at a secret military base in Estonia. They were sent there back in 2014, and their presence was kept secret.¹⁹ The troops are few, but the very fact of their presence raises doubts about the completeness of the published information on the alignment of forces in the region.

Deployment of new types of weapons around Belarus

In September, the U.S. Department of State and then the Congress okayed the purchase of 32 F-35A Lightning II fighters worth USD 6.5 billion by Poland. This changes the military situation in the region and increases the role of Poland in America's policy, allowing U.S. defense companies to make up for losses that may be incurred if those jets do not go to Turkey.

On 27 September, the Lithuanian army received 110 Unimog U5000 trucks. Under the contract signed in 2015, 340 five-ton trucks were purchased from Daimler AG. Eighty-eight vehicles were delivered earlier. On 18 October, the Lithuanian Defense Ministry announced the purchase of six new UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters worth EUR 300 million. They will be procured for the allied forces, rather than for Lithuania itself. It was officially said that the NATO forces stationed in the country needed them, and the vehicles are purchased not from the manufacturer, but from the U.S. government to ensure that they meet the requirements of the U.S. army.

In early September, Russia reported that the rearmament of the Western Military District with the newest T-72B3M tanks had been completed. On 12 October, the Baltic Fleet received the newest Sovetsk small missile ship of the 22800 Karakurt design. Three Su-35 multipurpose fighters arrived in mid-October at the Russian air defense regiment deployed in the Tver Region. As was reported in late October, Russia placed new Podsolnukh radar stations in the Baltic Region. Previously, they were only arranged in the Far East (since 2009) and in the Caspian Sea region (since 2014). The composite air defense regiment deployed

¹⁹ Anna Pihl, "Pealtnägija" viis vaataja Eestis alaliselt asuvasse eriüksuste salajasse baasi, <https://menu.err.ee/976799/pealtnagija-viis-vaataja-eestis-alaliselt-asuvasse-eriüksuste-salajasse-baasi>

in the Leningrad Region received the Mi-26t heavy transport multipurpose helicopter on 25 October. The newest Tor-M2 air defense systems were supplied to the Baltic Fleet's surface to air-missile regiment on 31 October.

Forecast

The region is likely to see a new spike of confrontation in the coming months — years of investments in military infrastructure, redeployment and rearmament of the armies of all parties to the regional confrontation amid the weakening of international security treaties will determine the situation in this part of the continent. This is fraught, inter alia, with a gradual undermining of communication and political, economic and cultural ties against the backdrop of heavy spending on defense by the countries that still lag behind in terms of socio-economic development. Belarus has long resisted the region-wide militarization trend, but now it is following this path as well, albeit slower and more carefully than all of its neighbors.

Some countries of the region, especially Lithuania and Poland, will continue to exploit the confrontation between Russia and the United States, having their own agenda, and they can achieve much in the short term, including by taking advantage of NATO's capabilities to exert pressure on Belarus (For example, Lithuania invited an American battalion to the area near the Belarusian border amidst the dispute between the two countries over the Belarusian nuclear power plant). These countries will most likely head on to purchase American equipment that they do not objectively need, second every bit of America's policy in NATO and the EU, and strive for hosting as many U.S. and NATO troops as possible.

Belarus will keep the distance from Russia, although they have slightly intensified their cooperation recently. Therefore, cooperation with NATO and the neighboring states that are members or partners of NATO will continue, no matter how paradoxical this may seem. Belarus will pursue the same goals when establishing partnerships with China, and the country's defense capacities will be strengthened.

Belarus will be able to maintain its autonomy in the defense sector, but will incur financial costs and experience increasing political and economic pressure of the Kremlin. The snowballing economic problems in the relationship with Moscow will be directly interconnected with Minsk's categorical refusal to adapt its vision of regional security and its security interests to the Kremlin's understanding of the situation and policies. Minsk certainly wants to maintain a flexible alliance with Moscow and will take some steps to please its partner.

Appendix 1

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

Relationship with Russia

Date	Event	Point
4 September	President's meeting on integration	+1
5 September	Kruty: roadmaps will be signed in December	+1
5 September	Pietryšenka meets with Mezentsev. Positive statements about bilateral relations.	+1
6 September	Statement by Lukashenka about negative aspects of the relations with Russia	-1
6 September	Rumas and Medvedev approve integration maps	+2
10 September	Patrushev's visit to Minsk	+1
12 September	Mezentsev hands over his credentials to Lukashenka	+1
13 September	Shield of Union military exercise	+1
16 September	Sienko: Belarus short of BYN 520 million	-2
20 September	Meeting of Belarusian and Russian police services focusing on cross-border cooperation	+1
20 September	Days of Spiritual Culture of Russia and Belarus	+1
25 September	Siamaška meets with the governor of the Orel Region	+1
26 September	Lukashenka's meeting with Ukrainian media	+1
1 October	EEU Summit	+1
1 October	Makiej's interview for RBC	+1
1 October	Liašenka: gas contract is being prepared for one year	-1
9 October	Zas meets with Russian Ambassador Mezentsev	+1
15 October	Jeūdačenka: Belarus's exports USD 1.5 billion short of target because of Russia	-2
17 October	Lukashenka's meeting with Governor of the Novgorod Region Nikitin	+1
17 October	Makiej's meeting with Lavrov	+1
21 October	Lukashenka's meeting with Governor of the Sverdlovsk Region Kuyvashev	+1
22 October	Rumas's meeting with Medvedev	+1
25 October	Shoigu on the joint response to NATO activity	+1
25 October	Belarus-Kazakhstan consultations with Russia on oil transit	+1

Date	Event	Point
30 October	Rumas on difficulties in approximating roadmap positions	-1
30 October	NBB, Central Bank of Russia agree financial policy approaches	+1
September-October	No visa agreement has been concluded	-1
September-October	Elimination of restrictions on exports of Belarusian products to Russia (Glubokoye, Kovry Bresta, etc.)	+1
Total		+15

Relationship with the EU

Date	Event	Point
3 September	Kraŭčanka meets with State Secretary of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Lukáš Parížek.	+1
9 September	Transport and Communications Minister Avramienka meets with Deputy State Secretary of Latvia's Transport Ministry Uldis Reimanis.	+1
10 September	Kraŭčanka meets with German Ambassador Manfred Huterer.	+1
10 September	Makiej meets with Head of the Delegation of the European Union Dirk Schuebel.	+1
11 September	Makiej and Miasnikovič meet with Deputy Foreign Minister of Bulgaria Petko Doykov.	+1
11 September	Belarus-Bulgaria interministerial consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers.	+1
12 September	Kraŭčanka meets with Ambassador of Croatia Tomislav Car.	+1
17 September	Kraŭčanka meets with French Ambassador Didier Canesse.	+1
17 September	Kraŭčanka meets with Head of the Delegation of the European Union Dirk Schuebel.	+1
19 September	Jeŭdačenka meets with Head of the Delegation of the European Union Dirk Schuebel.	+1
20 September	Dapkiunas meets with Ambassador of Poland Artur Michalski.	+1
20 September	Decision of the Belarusian president to sign agreements with the EU on visa facilitation and readmission.	+2
25 September	Signing of the administrative agreement on the application of the pension agreement between Belarus and the Czech Republic.	+1
26 September	Kraŭčanka meets with State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany Ulrich Nussbaum.	+1
27 September	Kraŭčanka meets with British Ambassador Jacqueline Perkins.	+1
30 September	Rumas meets with German Ambassador Manfred Huterer.	+1
2 October	14th meeting of the Belarus-Latvia Intergovernmental Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation with the participation of the minister of transport and communications of Belarus and the Minister of Transport of Latvia.	+1
3 October	Transport and Communications Minister Avramienka meets with Minister of Transport and Communications of Lithuania Jaroslav Narkevič.	+1
3 October	Kraŭčanka meets with Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland Marcin Przydacz and participates in the Warsaw Security Forum.	+1
4 October	Kraŭčanka participates in structured consultations on the prospects of Eastern Partnership after 2020 organized by the EU Delegation.	+1
7-8 October	Šestakoŭ participates in the opening ceremony of the office of the Italian Trade Agency (ICE-ITA) which promotes the internationalization of Italian companies; Italian-Belarusian forum on green economy attended by Pietryšenka.	+1
8 October	Kraŭčanka meets with the German Federal Government's coordinator for inter-societal cooperation with Russia, Central Asia and the Eastern Partnership countries on the sidelines of the Minsk Dialogue Forum.	+1

Date	Event	Point
8 October	Kraŭčanka meets with the French delegation led by the Deputy Director General for Politics and Security of the French Foreign Ministry on the sidelines of the Minsk Dialogue Forum.	+1
9 October	Andrejčanka meets with German Ambassador Manfred Huterer.	+1
21 October	Miasnikovič meets with a delegation of the Slovak Parliament.	+1
21-22 October	Makiej visits Germany.	+2
23 October	Kruty meets with President of the EBRD Suma Chakrabarti.	+1
23-24 October	Šestakoŭ meets with State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy of Slovakia Rastislav Chovanec; 14th meeting of the Belarus-Slovakia joint commission for trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation.	+1
28 October	Lukashenka's warning addressed to Vilnius about Minsk's possible retaliation in the course of a discussion of the military and political situation after the deployment of the U.S. military contingent in Lithuania.	-1
29 October	Makiej meets with Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Martin Tlapa.	+1
29 October	Belarus-Czech Republic business forum in Minsk with the participation of deputy foreign ministers of both countries.	+1
31 October	Miasnikovič meets with Austrian Ambassador Aloisia Wörgetter.	+1
31 October	Zas and Dapkiunas meet with Deputy Director General of Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission Maciej Popowski.	+1
September-October	Overall positive materials in the official media and statements of the country's leadership regarding the EU.	+1
Total		+34

Relationship with China

Date	Event	Point
2-4 September	Days of Chinese culture in Minsk	+1
10-12 September	Deputy Minister of Economy Piarminava visits China, participates in the Belarus-China cross-border e-commerce forum (Qingdao)	+1
11-13 September	Meeting of the Bilateral Coordination Committee on Cooperation in Arms and Military Equipment, Minsk	+1
13 September	3rd meeting of the Commission for Cultural Cooperation of the Belarus-China Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation, Minsk	+1
16 September	Celebration on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China at the House of Friendship with the participation of Deputy Foreign Minister Dapkiunas	+1
23 September	Signing of a memorandum on cooperation in competition and price supervision, consumer protection and advertising regulation between the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade of Belarus and the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR)	+1
27 September	Reception on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China with the participation of Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Snapkoŭ	+1
1 October	Lukashenka congratulates Xi Jinping on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China	+1
1 October	Interview with Chinese Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming to BelTA "Belarus and China Are Entering a New Stage of Cooperation"	+1
October	Belarusbank takes a EUR 100 million loan from China Development Bank against the security of the government to replenish floating capital	+1
5 October	Confucius Institute Day in Minsk	+1
16 October	Opening of the Institute of Belarus Research at China's Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics	+1
17 October	Signing of an agreement on friendship and comprehensive cooperation between the Viciebsk Region Executive Committee and the Shandong Provincial People's Government	+1
20-22 October	Minister of Defense of Belarus Raŭkoŭ visits China, participates in the Beijing Xiangshan Security Forum, meets with Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe	+2
25 October	Snapkoŭ's interview to China's Xinhua agency, comments on support for China's official position on the situation in Hong Kong	+1
29 October	12th meeting of the Working Group on China-Belarus Industrial Park	+2
30 October	Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Belarus Snapkoŭ meets with Minister of Commerce of China Zhong Shan, Beijing	+2
	Speech by the Chinese Ambassador to Belarus, Cui Qiming at the House of Friendship focused on China-Belarus relations	+1
Total		+21

Relationship with the U.S.

Date	Event	Point
16 September	Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent visits Belarus	+1
17 September	U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale visits Minsk, meets with Lukashenka and Makiej. Hale's statement about willingness to discuss the easing of sanctions.	+2
7 October	Kraučanka meets with Director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs of the U.S. Department of State Bradley Freden and Senior Staff Member of the Republican Majority of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate of the United States Congress Hannah Thoburn	+1
Early October	Statements by the U.S. Secretary of Energy and Assistant Secretary of Energy regarding the safety of Belarusian NPP and the possibility of supplying U.S. nuclear fuel	+1
29 October-1 November	Kraučanka visits the United States. Belarus-U.S. dialogue on human rights. Meetings at the Department of State.	+1
16 October	Representatives of the U.S. Forest Service Leslie Swada and Mitch Roberts visit Belarus	+1
23 October	Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that sanctions are inadmissible	-1
28 October	Lukashenka holds a meeting on security issues, orders to work out countermeasures to the deployment of U.S. troops in Lithuania.	-1
29 October	Consultations between the U.S. Embassy in Minsk and Secretary of State of the Security Council of Belarus Stanislau Zas on the deployment of U.S. troops in Lithuania.	+2
September-October	Numerous positive statements by the Belarusian leadership on the advisability of improving relations with the U.S.	+3
Total		+10

Relationship with Ukraine

Date	Event	Point
3 September	Lukashenka: Belarus has shut tight the border with Ukraine	-1
7 September	Prisoner exchange between Ukraine and Russia. Gryb is on list and later says he was kidnapped by "Russians"	+1
12 September	Sixth meeting of the High-Level Working Group for Trade and Economic Relations	+1
12 September	Meeting of the deputy minister of industry of Belarus with the state secretary of the Ministry of Economic Development of Ukraine	+1
September	Kvartal TV takes license to broadcast in Belarus	+1
17 September	Belarus votes against the inclusion of a resolution on Ukraine (proposed by the Ukrainian delegation) in the order of business of the UN General Assembly	-1
18 September	Information in the Ukrainian media: Belarus and the Russian Federation intend to create a confederated state	-1
23 September	Exercise in the Rivne Region with its scenario envisaging a repelled attack from Belarus	-1
20 September	Naftohaz Ukrainy starts importing electricity in Ukraine	+1
24 September	Naftohaz Group starts importing diesel fuel from Belarus	+1
26 September	Media tour of Ukrainian journalists to Belarus	+2
1 October	Ukraine extends antidumping investigation into Belarusian metal products	-1
1 October	Belarusian road builders increase supplies of services to Ukraine several times	+1
2 October	Zhytomyr buys 49 Belarusian-made trolleybuses using the EBRD loan	+1
3 October	Russia shuts corridor for power generating coal supply to Ukraine through Belarus	-1
3 October	Bellesbumprom enterprises increase supplies to Ukraine by 20%	+1
3 October	Meeting of ministers of culture of the two countries in Kyiv	+1
3-4 October	Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine	+2
4 October	Meeting between Lukashenka and Zelensky, official visit	+3
4 October	Zelensky sees potential for Belarus-Ukraine products to enter third country markets	+1
4 October	Belorusneft and its subsidiaries sign an agreement with Ukrhazvydobuvannya for USD 400 million	+1
4 October	Belarusian and Ukrainian companies sign contracts worth over USD 500 million (commodities)	+1
4 October	BelAZ, Metinvest sign a contract for supplies of 10 dump trucks	+1
4 October	State Committee for Science and Technology signs a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine	+1

Date	Event	Point
4 October	Agreements on cooperation signed between 5 regions of Belarus and Ukraine	+1
4 October	Plan of consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Ukraine is signed	+1
4 October	Ukraine to perform dredging of its Pripjat River section by 2020	+1
4 October	Sharoiko's exchange and his gratitude to Zelensky and Lukashenka	+1
9 October	Meeting of the Belarusian ambassador to Ukraine with a deputy foreign minister	+1
10 October	Lukashenka invites Zelensky to Belarus	+1
11 October	At the CIS summit, Lukashenka calls for "support for the Ukrainian authorities"	+1
11 October	Meeting of the State Control Committee's deputy chairman with head of the Accounting Chamber of Ukraine	+1
16 October	Belarus and Ukraine approve a program for monitoring the condition of transboundary waters	+1
16 October	Record-breaking contract for road repair in Ukraine	+1
17 October	Inspection of the territory of Ukraine by Belarusian military	+1
29 October	Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine refers to work on the Belarusian-Ukrainian section of the E-40 waterway a priority	+1
23 October	Ministers of transport and infrastructure of Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine discuss the creation of a new transport corridor in Tbilisi	+1
25 October	UIA ceases flights to Belarus	-1
29-30 October	Working meeting of representatives of the Ministries of Defence of Belarus and Ukraine	+1
Total		+29

Appendix 2

Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

Date	Event	National security	Regional tension
September-October	10 mutual inspections and other confidence-building measures taken by Belarus and foreign states (See Table 2)	+1	+2
September-October	9 exercises conducted by Russia near Belarus (See Table 1)	0	-5
September-October	8 exercises conducted by NATO members and partners near Belarus (See Table 1)	0	-4
September-October	Developments in the east of Ukraine	+1	+1
September-October	Two territorial defense seminars with senior officials of the Minsk and Hrodna Regions	+1	0
September	Formation of new units of the Polish army and deployment of some of them near the Belarusian border	-2	-1
2-6 September	Combat Commonwealth-2019 exercise of the CIS air defense forces at the Ashuluk training ground of Russia	+1	0
11-12 September	Joint special tactical exercise of the engineering troops of Belarus and Russia	+1	0
13-19 September	Union Shield-2019 exercise in the Nizhny Novgorod Region of Russia	+1	0
19 September	Russian president's proposal on a moratorium on missile deployment	0	+1
23 September	Signing of the Poland-U.S. declaration on enhanced defense cooperation	-1	-1
Late September	Tactical exercises with the 740th and 147th anti-aircraft missile regiments	+1	0
8 October	Speech by President Lukashenka at the International Security Conference	+1	+1
8-12 October	Special tactical exercise with military unit 89417	+1	0
8-29 October	Combat Brotherhood-2019 exercise of the CSTO in Belarus, Russia and Tajikistan	+1	0
Mid-October	Joint command post exercise with the 6th and 11th infantry brigades	+1	0
20-25 October	Joint tactical exercises of the airborne troops of Belarus and Russia	+1	-1
21 October	Redeployment of the U.S. tank battalion to the Belarusian border	-2	-1

Date	Event	National security	Regional tension
21-24 (?) October	Inspection of the air force and air defense of Belarus	+1	0
25 October	Session of the joint board of the Defense Ministries of Belarus and Russia	-1	-1
28 October	President Lukashenka's meeting on response to NATO's actions	+1	-1
31 October	Supply of the newest Tor-M2 air defense systems to the Russian Baltic Fleet	0	-1
Late October	Information on the deployment of Russian Podsolnukh radars in the Baltic region	0	-1
Total		+8	-12 (Yellow)

Appendix 3

Colour scale of regional security tensions

Colour Value	Numerical Value	Interpretation
White	higher than -1	Low likelihood of escalation. Non-threatening situation
Green	from -2 to -6	Presence of military activities, which do not pose a direct threat and will not necessarily lead to the escalation of tensions. Such a situation calls for cautious attention.
Yellow	from -7 to -12	Military and other activity is observed that is capable of leading to the escalation of tensions. The situation calls for close attention.
Orange	from -13 to -17	Military preparations in the region. Growing tensions. Situation is threatening.
Red	-18 and lower	Sharp escalation of tensions. The conflict is virtually unavoidable. A pre-war situation.

Authors

Sergey Bogdan, political expert, analyst at the Ostrogorski Centre. He received his doctoral degree from Freie Universität Berlin. Research interests: Belarus's external policy and military security.

Valeria Kostyugova, political commentator and adviser. She serves as head of Agency of Policy Expertise (Vilnius, Lithuania), editor of the expert community website Nashe Mnenie (Our Opinion). Research interests: Belarus-Russia relationship, Belarusian political parties and political organizations.

Olga Kulai, analyst at the Center for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies (Minsk, Belarus), holds a master's degree in Oriental Studies from the School of International Relations at Belarusian State University. She has worked for some Chinese companies in Minsk, as well as at the Republican Confucius Institute of Sinology at Belarusian State University. Research interests: China's foreign policy and external investments.

Dzianis Melyantsou, political analyst, expert in international relations, coordinator of Foreign Policy of Belarus programme, Minsk Dialogue expert initiative. He specializes in Belarus's foreign policy, as well as national and international security.

Yauheni Preiherman, political analyst, expert in international relations, head of the Minsk Dialogue expert initiative. Main research interests: foreign policy of small nations, international relations in Eastern Europe, Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security.

Igor Tyshkevich, expert of the International and Internal Policy program at the Ukrainian Institute for the Future.